

*The Duty of instructing and relieving Neglected
Children.*

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT
SALTERS-HALL,

ON LORD'S DAY EVENING,

JUNE 16th, 1793,

IN BEHALF OF THE

Protestant Dissenting Charity School,

ESTABLISHED IN

WOOD-STREET, SPITAL-FIELDS.

By the Rev. **HUGH WORTHINGTON, JUN.**

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S E R M O N, &c.

P S A L M LXXII. 4.

He shall save the Children of the Needy.

THE composition of this Psalm is ascribed in the last verse to David, and appears, from the title, or inscription, to have been written with a reference to his son Solomon, who was to succeed him on the throne of Israel. Probably, it was penned a little time before David's decease, when Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, publicly anointed Solomon, and invested him with the regal office. (a)

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But

(a) 1 Kings, i. 38, &c.

But the sacred author seems to pass from hence, to a subject much more sublime and important ; from the temporal reign of Solomon, to the spiritual and everlasting reign of the Messiah. David himself was a type of Christ. *(b)* To him was the promise made, “ that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, God would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.” *(c)* And we know, on the express authority of the New Testament, that in various places this holy man prophesied concerning Jesus, as the future King and Redeemer of Israel. “ All things (said our Saviour) must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the *Psalms*, concerning me.” *(d)* That some parts of the Psalm now before us were dictated with an ultimate view to the Messiah, was the avowed opinion of the ancient Jewish expositors. The Rabbins freely acknowledged, that many sentiments delivered in this Psalm, can be applied to Solomon, only by way of hyperbole, or strong figure, but to the expected

(b) Jeremiah xxx. 9. Ezek. xxxvii. 24, 25. Hosea iii. 5.

(c) Acts ii. 30. *(d)* Luke xxiv. 44.

expected Christ, without any hyperbole. (c) This, I persuade myself, will be your opinion, if you carefully consider those verses, which describe the extent, the duration, the nature and effect of the government here predicted. The extent is universal ; the duration perpetual ; the nature and effect such as shall interest, purify, and delight every human being. You may particularly examine verse 5th ; “ They shall fear thee so long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.” Likewise the 7th and 8th ; “ In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace

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(c) See Grotius, Poole's Synopsis, Bishop Patrick, &c.—This is not the place to discuss the long agitated question concerning what is called the *double sense* of prophecy. I shall only say, that I am no advocate for it, either in the sense in which it is often explained, or in the degree to which it has been carried. In arguing with Deists and unbelievers, I would never lay any stress upon passages of an ambiguous kind : but when once we are convinced by clear and indubitable texts, that Jesus is the Messiah, foretold by the ancient prophets, we need not hesitate to allow, that in a variety of passages, the sacred writers have interwoven predictions of Christ with subjects of a temporal nature. If I may use the expression, they *slide* into such prophecies, without giving notice of the transition. Let one example suffice ; what David seems to assert respecting himself (Psalm xvi. 8—11) is positively applied to Christ, and to him only, both by the Apostle Peter (Acts ii. 25—32) and by St. Paul, when Preaching at Antioch, Acts xiii. 35—37.

so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." Once more, you have in the 17th verse an expression, so similar to the promise made to Abraham, respecting the birth of the Messiah in the line of his descendants, that the resemblance must strike every one who gives himself leisure to reflect; "Men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed."

Now, the point which I have endeavoured to establish, or the reference of this Psalm, partly to Solomon as a secular Prince, and partly to Christ as a spiritual one, is the happiest union that could be desired, when we have in view the recommending the care of necessitous children. If to each the sentiment be applicable, "he shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."—If, to provide instruction and comfort for the offspring of indigent parents, be an act becoming the character of a king, and not below the office and dignity of the Saviour, it

it must be rational, it must be laudable, to be fired with a constant zeal to imitate such illustrious patterns. Let me hope, that every one present is ambitious to acquire so simple, and yet so great a character, as that of *saving the children of the needy*.

The terms here used, require but little explication: the original word, which we have rendered *save*, signifies to compassionate, deliver, and assist; to rescue persons from those evils to which they are exposed, and to make them as happy, respectable and useful, as their situation in life admits. Therefore, your BENEVOLENCE is the best exposition on the text: it needs no commentary from the preacher.

Indeed, sirs, had I no higher ambition, than the desire of saying something new, I should not have appeared in this house this evening. In the whole sphere of knowledge, there is not perhaps a subject so often treated, and so universally understood, as that of commiseration and charity. If I thought you came

hither with the spirit of the ancient Athenians, to learn what had not been told you, (f) I should be unhappy: but trusting you are assembled on better principles, there are two circumstances which afford me solid relief in the delivery of this plain discourse. One is, that the Apostles themselves have represented it as a minister's duty, to *remind*, rather than *inform*. According to their own example, as well as doctrine, it is a good thing "to stir up pure minds by way of remembrance; and therefore to repeat the same thing, to us is not grievous, and for you is safe." (g)—In the next place, the very circumstance which deprives our discourses, on these occasions, of the least appearance of novelty, is in a moral and religious view so essentially desirable, that instead of requiring an apology, it deserves every day to be matter of thanksgiving to God. I will explain myself. It is in every one's mouth, that charity is a hackneyed subject; but is there one in this assembly, who could wish it were *not* hackneyed? Would
you

(f) Acts xvii. 21.

(g) 2 Peter iii. 1. Phil. iii. 1.

you strip both present and past ages of their greatest glory? Would you annihilate the chief honour of your country? What but the reiterated consideration of charitable motives has given rise to those extensive and numerous edifices, where the lame are restored to soundness—where sickness finds a couch, and misery an alleviation—where the blind are shelter'd from danger, scorn and want—where hungry children are fed, and their minds cloathed with knowledge, as well as their bodies with raiment—where old age forgets its infirmities, and can smile beneath the burden of time—or where humble penitence sheds her tears in secret, and learns at once both to reform and to hope? Let me freely tell you, there could not be a greater curse upon Britain, than to have pleas for charity a novelty in her empire.

But it is time to offer a few considerations, to recommend to your countenance and support, an institution like that before you: and the FIRST argument shall be derived from *the circumstances of the children themselves.*

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They are “ the children of the needy : ” that is the title which they bear in the text.—— Every child is in many respects an object of compassion ; born into a world abounding with vanity and sin ; launched on a wide sea of error and temptation ; liable to a thousand difficulties, and to a thousand afflictions. However, the children of those in competent circumstances, to say nothing of the affluent, are furnished with various helps to lessen, if not to remedy, these evils. They are screened from the pinching hand of penury ; with attendants and tutors they are early supplied ; they have friends to guide and cheer them ; every benefit of instruction is to them always accessible.——But the children of the needy, without your charitable aid, have none of these helps. The inheritance to which they are born, is poverty ; this, with few exceptions, is entailed from father to son. In consequence, three evils peculiarly attend their condition, and should powerfully excite our sympathy ; want—ignorance—and exposure to vice.

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The first of these is self-evident. When parents can scarcely provide for themselves, how is it possible that they should lay up for an increasing family? Of parents addicted to indolence or vice, I say nothing: but suppose, that both father and mother are sober, diligent, and oeconomical; suppose, that they constantly meet with employment in the particular occupation they pursue (and this, by the way, is in ten thousand cases a supposition not supported by fact :) grant, that while they have health and strength, they are able to acquire a sufficiency for cloathing and feeding their numerous offspring——but let a few weeks of sickness overtake any member of the family, especially the heads of it, and then what becomes of the little all for which they have laboured hard both by day and night? Who therefore does not see, that the poor, even when virtuous and prudent, are exposed to the iron grasp of want?

The second affliction incident to poverty is ignorance. Such parents have neither time, nor learning, nor a fund sufficient, to bestow
 5 education

education on their children. They may possess, naturally, as good faculties of understanding, recollection and judgment, as any persons who are placed in the higher ranks of society ; for original talents can never depend on the external circumstances of condition : but the urgent calls of daily employment have afforded them, through the whole of life, very little leisure for improving these native faculties, or for obtaining the treasures of knowledge, human or divine. And even if they were qualified to teach, the same pressure of business would prevent their having opportunity to communicate much instruction to their children. At home, then, there is little prospect of their educating their youth ; and abroad they cannot send them, where the cultivation of learning must be followed with expence. Thus is ignorance the attendant on poverty.

And the consequence of ignorance is exposure to vice. I do not say, that the ignorant are necessarily vicious, or that an improved understanding is always accompanied with
purity

purity of heart, or rectitude of life. But the proper fruit of knowledge is an enlarged acquaintance with the motives which lead to right conduct. In proportion as we understand the nature of the divine perfections, the evidences, doctrines and precepts of the gospel, we must be furnished with the noblest helps for discharging our duty to God and man, and for acquiring moral government over our passions and appetites. Therefore ignorance shuts out a variety of important auxiliaries to virtue, and must leave us doubly exposed to the subtle and powerful temptations of an ensnaring world. Behold the hazardous situation to which poverty is obnoxious !

I must presume, then, you really wish to deliver the poor from the evils I have mentioned ; you are desirous of serving them essentially ; but remember, you can never serve them so much, as during the tender years of their descendants. If they are good parents, they will think so ; if grateful, they will acknowledge it. CHILDHOOD is the proper season for giving instruction and assistance. The wise man saith, " Train

up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (b) And the prophet Isaiah has inculcated the necessity of early tuition in language remarkably striking; "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." (i) The early part of life is in every sense the fittest for communicating knowledge, for checking the passions, and for ingrafting religious principles. At that period there is most leisure—the faculties are quickest—memory is most acute and strong—the feelings are peculiarly susceptible and tender—bad habits are not yet formed, and vicious communications have not as yet corrupted good manners. And let me also remind you, childhood is the age peculiarly marked by the prevalence of *curiosity*. Every thing is new to children, therefore

(b) Prov. xxii. 6.

(i) Isaiah xxviii. 9, 10.

every thing excites surprise. They shew an extraordinary promptitude to inquire, and are never weary of asking questions. My friends, lay hold of this principle ; indulge this curiosity ; but indulge it wisely ; lead them to the knowledge of the scriptures, the knowledge of their duty, the knowledge of their salvation, I observe

SECONDLY. To support an institution of this kind, is to *confer benefit on the publick.*

A truly patriotic spirit will ever be seeking the good of the community, and must be anxious to devise methods, by which its virtue may be secured, and its happiness augmented. It should be the motto of every citizen and member of a state, "none of us liveth to himself." (k) While we enjoy the blessings of government, the protection of law, and the manufactures of industry and art, what is more just and reasonable, than to consult the natural and moral advantage of the

(k) Romans xiv. 7.

the empire? We cannot all be statesmen, or legislators; we cannot all give council in the senate, or display execution in the field; but we may still contribute a very important share towards the strength and prosperity of the kingdom. The community has not a better patriot, than the man who looks diligently to the education of children, and who either by personal care, or by imparting of his substance, endeavours to have them trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Let me ask, from whence are we to be supplied with good servants? with persons qualified to carry on the several trades and occupations of human life——persons, who shall have knowledge to conduct business, and in whose fidelity we can place a perfect confidence? Without the co-operation of those in lower circumstances, every labour and project, every trade and manufacture must stand still. Or what is worse, if such persons be devoid of integrity and uprightness, these important concerns of civil society must be defrauded and ruined. You cannot partake of
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an ordinary meal, nor sit down in a common dwelling, without being encompassed with objects, which forcibly prove our dependance on society. If therefore we are benefitted by the public, let us live to the public. If we receive much, how great would be the shame of returning nothing ?

It has been observed in agriculture, that the better any soil is by nature, the worse it becomes by the husbandman's neglect. And thus in society, the more there is of acuteness and sagacity (which are as common to the poor as the rich) there is the greater need of having them well directed, or they will be proportionably the greater pests of mankind. Of this truth both the antient Spartans and Persians were so sensible, that they would not intrust the education of youth with their parents, but obliged them to send their children to the publick schools, where instructors were appointed by the magistrates. I do not say, that such a practice was either consonant to the feelings of nature, or agreeable to the intention of Providence : but it

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shews, how deeply even heathens were convinced of the necessity of good instruction, and sound discipline ; and that they believed the prosperity, or decline of states, to depend principally on the education of children.

THIRDLY. By shewing kindness to the children of the needy, we may do *an important service to ourselves, and to them of our own household.*

The performance of this duty is one of the appointed means of drawing down upon us the divine favour. How many and rich are the PROMISES of God, to those that compassionate and relieve the miseries of the poor ? the time would fail me, to enumerate all the declarations in Scripture, which breathe delightful encouragement, and pronounce a gracious reward, upon such a temper and practice. “ Thou shalt surely give to thy poor brother, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him ; because that for this thing, the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all thou puttest thine hand

hand unto. (l) Blessed is he that considereth the poor ; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing : thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. (m) There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat ; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. (n) He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord ; and that which he hath given will he pay him again. (o) Cast thy bread upon the waters : for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight ; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. (p) The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand. (q) When thou seest the naked, cover him ; and hide not thyself from thine own flesh. If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul ; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as

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(l) Deut. xv. 10. (m) Psalm xli. 1—3. (n) Prov. xi. 24, 25.
 (o) Prov. xix. 17. (p) Eccles. xi. 1, 2. (q) Isaiah xxxii. 8.

the noon-day. (r) God loveth a cheerful giver. (s) To do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (t) Whosoever shall give to drink, unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple; verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." (u)——Thus, the conscientious discharge of the social duties, proves in the end most beneficial and friendly to our personal happiness. And in this sense, at least, the admired sentiment of the poet is just—"He bade self-love and social be the same."

But this part of our subject may be placed in a very different light. Benevolent contributions to necessitous children, may yield personal and everlasting benefit to parents and masters of families, by AWAKENING IN THEIR HEARTS a greater solicitude to do justice to their own children, servants and domestics. Perhaps this argument is not attended

(r) Isaiah lviii. 7—10. (s) 2 Cor. ix. 7. (t) Heb. xiii. 16.
(u) Matt. x. 42.

tended to so much as it deserves. It is not of a nature to strike by its brilliancy : but ye shall be judges, whether it be defective in weight. I lay this down as a general maxim, that whatever will assist and excite us to the performance of duty, is itself commendable, is itself a duty : and he is neither a wise nor a good man, who is not disposed to embrace every reasonable auxiliary. Let the parent, therefore, contribute in publick to the children of the poor, and when he returns home, he is furnished with additional motives to take care of his own children. Seeing the wants of other young persons, he naturally thinks of his own little family. *These also* require food and raiment : *these also* are ignorant, for they came into the world without one idea : *these also* are hastening to their latter end, and to a solemn reckoning. And what ! shall I take care of another man's offspring, and have no concern about my own ? shall I make an ostentation of charity, and yet be devoid of its substance ? shall I give countenance to this or that publick institution, and not be industrious, attentive, circumspect and pious

at home, where my exertion is still more wanted, and my example may be still more efficacious?—thus may every parent both reason and act. I wish all your children may be for ever benefited, by the acts of kindness done this day to the children of the needy. (v)

FOURTHLY. By granting this seasonable help to the poor, we shall in our measure *co-operate with GOD himself, and become instrumental in fulfilling the great schemes of his Providence.* A solemn reflection! a consideration at once sublime and animating! The Divine Being ordained the present diversity of human conditions. “The rich and poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all.” (x) It was his own decree, concerning even the land of promise, which should flow with milk and honey, “the poor shall never cease

(v) One of the antients, a rich man, but both ignorant and mercenary, applied to Aristippus, a Philosopher, to educate his son; being informed of the terms on which he taught, he thought them extravagant, and said, “he could buy a slave for less money.” *Then buy one* (said the Philosopher) *and you will possess two.* Admirable lesson to parents, who deem sordid pelf more valuable than their childrens instruction!

(x) Prov. xxii. 2.

cease out of the land." (y) And as this subordination of ranks is neither capricious nor accidental, but originally intended by God, so it is worthy of God; worthy of his wisdom and benevolence. It lays a foundation for calling forth and exercising many virtues, which otherwise would be very feeble, or perpetually dormant. It is best suited to a state of trial, and greatly enlarges the field of human duties. It connects man with man, exciting mutual dependance, compassion, obligation, and gratitude. That, in some respects, we are all of us equal, none but a political or religious bigot would deny: for we have equal right to liberty and protection, and are equally designed for a better world, if we faithfully improve our talents. But the levelling scheme, which would reduce to one standard all the present possessions and external circumstances of men, is as remote from common sense, as it is from the Scripture. It would make civil society as disjointed as a rope of sand. Every argument which analogy can furnish, utterly opposes it. Could you

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raise

raise a building, that should be compact, strong and convenient, if all the materials were of one size and quality?—you could not. In every large edifice, there is a great diversity of materials; some are brought from the forest, some from the metallic bed, some from the quarry. Make them one, and they are of little use.—So it is in the human frame, “ If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? but now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” This, you remember, is the apostle’s observation in his address to the Corinthians; and the inference he draws from it is essentially to our purpose. “ The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Therefore there should be no schism in the body; but the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honour’d, all the members rejoice with it.”

it." (z) Seeing then, the great ruler of the universe expects, that we keep in view this divine constitution of things, let us, by acts of love and liberality, produce from such a scheme all the blessed effects, which it is capable of answering.

It has been remarked, by some acute observers of human nature, that our Creator has made us much more sensible to the misery, than to the happiness of others. I believe the fact in general is incontrovertible. We may behold the success or prosperity of a fellow-creature with complacency; our congratulation on account of it may be perfectly sincere: but it does not raise that emotion in the bosom, it does not excite that interest in the sensibilities of the heart, which the sight of a melancholy accident, the hearing of an awful bereavement, or the knowledge of any scene of deep distress, would occasion.—This is wisely appointed. For they that are rich, healthy, and happy, want the fellowship and
attention

(z) 1 Cor. xii. 17, 18, 25, 26.

attention of others, much less than those who are poor, diseased, and afflicted. In the latter case, our aid is necessary : therefore the sympathy, which prompts us to communicate aid, is rendered feelingly alive. Thus, our very constitution shews us our duty. The voice of Providence sounds through all the region of the heart. My brethren, let us practically regard the lessons it would teach us. And as we cannot misunderstand the benevolent purposes of the Moral Governor of the world, let us esteem it our highest glory, to be used as instruments by him, in carrying them into effect.

Once more, FIFTHLY, To assist the children of the poor, is *to imitate the example of our SAVIOUR, and essentially to promote the generous designs of his kingdom.*

You have heard, in the former part of this discourse, that the Messiah is prefigured in this psalm. To him the character is eminently applicable, “ he shall save the children of the needy.” Accordingly the prophet
Isaiah,

Isaiah, when delineating the care and condescension of Christ under the similitude of a Shepherd, foretells, "he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." (a) Perhaps there is not a more prominent feature, and certainly not a more amiable one, in the whole of our Lord's character upon earth, than his compassion to the poor, and his merciful attention to children. When John the Baptist sent two of his Disciples, to enquire whether he was THE CHRIST—either with a view of satisfying *their* doubts, for John could have none, or as an oblique method of reminding him, that he thought it hard, that the fore-runner of the Messiah should be suffered to lie in prison, (b) —he made this spirited and noble reply, "go, and tell John those things which ye hear and see; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf

(a) Isaiah xl. 11.

(b) To this latter solution of the difficulty I am most inclined, on account of the words following, which seem to contain a stigma on the impatience of John; "and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be *offended* in me." Matt. xi. 6. Luke vii. 23.

deaf hear, the dead are raised up, *and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*" This he considered as a glorious and decisive proof, that he was the true Messiah. Neither Pagan philosophers, nor Jewish rabbies, had consulted the instruction of the poor : but the Saviour never forgot them ; their improvement in knowledge, and consolation in trouble, lay near to his heart——Of his attention to children, the evangelical history is full. When certain parents brought their children to Jesus, to receive his benediction, and the disciples rebuked those who brought them, as troublesome and impertinent, " he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." (c) The same delightful temper of condescension and mercy manifested itself after

(c) Mark x. 13—16.

ter his resurrection from the dead : the cold grave could not damp or chill it. " Lovest thou me ? " said Christ three times to the ashamed and penitent Peter ; he said unto him, " Yea Lord, thou' knowest that I love thee : " Jesus replied, " FEED MY LAMBS. (*d*) That is the test of thy regard for me : less than that I will not accept. — My brethren, do we believe these things, and still are any of us benumbed with apathy ? Have we no feeling ? no gratitude ? no sense of obligation to the Son of God ? no emulation to tread in his steps, who went about doing good continually ? no desire of copying his example, by befriending the helpless poor, and instructing their ignorant children ? For them, equally with ourselves, he lived, laboured and died : for their sakes, as well as ours, he visited this fallen world, endured the contradiction of sinners against himself ; suffered the pangs of mortality ; erected a kingdom of grace, and is ascended to prepare a kingdom of glory. Let us then either promote his benevolent

(*d*) John xxi. 15.

volent designs, or in justice to him renounce the name of a Christian : a name which we cannot disparage with impunity.

When you read the history of Jesus comprised in the gospels, I doubt not, you are often ready to wish, that you could *personally* have ministered to our Lord's necessities, or by kindness have soothed the severity of his trials. You frequently indulge the reflection——had I seen him, when wearied with journeying, he sat down at a well in Samaria, and being athirst, desired water to drink ; had I beheld him at Nazareth, when his countrymen thrust him out of the city, and would have cast him headlong from the brow of a hill ; had I been witness to the strange opposition of the Samaritans, who refused him entrance into a village, or of the Gedarènes, who desired him to depart out of their coasts ; had I seen the cowardly behaviour of his own disciples, when many of them went back, and walked no more with him ; had I been present at Jerusalem, when the Jews repeatedly took up stones to destroy him ;

him; had I viewed him in the garden of Gethsemane, when in the agony of his soul his sweat resembled drops of blood; above all, had I been a spectator of his vile imprisonment, and infamous condemnation—with what affection and eagerness would I have pressed forward to vindicate his character, to supply his wants, to open my door to his reception, to sympathize with his sorrows, and to lighten where I could not annihilate his burdens. This heart would have commiserated—these hands would have been extended—these feet would have been swift, to succour him! My friends, these are pious and grateful sentiments; I rejoice you feel them: and they are *still not in vain*; though the heavens have received him out of your sight. The poor are always with you: go forth among them, and give bread to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty; take in the stranger; clothe the naked; attend the sick; visit the prisoner: and be assured, that you have *virtually* relieved, protected and comforted the Son of God. The day is fast approaching, when, in the presence of an as-

sembled world, this Saviour will pronounce his everlasting remembrance of "your work of faith, and labor of love."—IN AS MUCH AS YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN, YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME.

Thus I have laid before you some arguments, plain indeed, but I hope not nugatory, to enforce a cheerful and generous attention to institutions formed for the instruction and relief of necessitous children. We have pleaded the circumstances peculiar to their condition, as the children of the needy—the benefit we may thus confer on the publick—the important service we may render to ourselves, and to them of our own household—the high honour of co-operating with the benevolent plans of Providence—and the duty and joy of imitating our Saviour's example, and accomplishing, in some measure, the purposes of his kingdom.

Let me now more particularly point out to your notice, and recommend to your patronage,

nage, that useful and well conducted institution, which has brought us together at this time. (c) The Protestant Dissenting Charity School in Spital-Fields, was founded in the year 1717, without any distinction of parties, or spirit of bigotry. In 1787, it was removed to its present situation in Wood-Street, and then consisted of seventy children, namely, forty boys, and thirty girls. From that time, it has repeatedly made additions to the objects of its relief, and in September last was augmented to the number it now supports and educates, fifty of each sex, in all ONE HUNDRED CHILDREN. The printed report informs you, that they are clothed once a year, and have linen, shoes, and stockings

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(c) As this discourse was lately preached to a congregation of Dissenters at Leicester, in behalf of a similar institution, it may possibly fall into the hands of some who then heard it. Such will not be surprised at any variations, of a local nature, in this part of the sermon. Happy am I to announce the growing prosperity of the schools which are there supported. And I gladly embrace this opportunity of returning my public thanks to that respectable Society, for the many proofs of candour I have received from them; and still more, for the numerous expressions of their affectionate esteem for an aged and worthy parent, who has sustained the pastoral character among them more than half a century.

ings twice a year : that the boys are taught reading, writing, and arithmetic ; that the girls are instructed in the two former, together with plain-work ; and as they are employed upon materials necessary for the cloathing of the school, that very employment tends to lessen the expences of the institution. In order that parents may not be too much deprived of the assistance of their children's labour, the managers very judiciously admit them between the age of eight and eleven, and keep them three years. The total number of children hitherto admitted to the benefits of this school, amounts to **TWO THOUSAND AND SEVENTY.**

Surely, the mere statement of these particulars must effectually recommend the institution to all who are made acquainted with them.

We grant, indeed, that this school, like many others, labours under what some would call, a deficiency. It possesses no opportunity of boarding and lodging the children ; it cannot

cannot boast an edifice, large and stately, favoured with rich endowments, and furnished with numerous conveniences, for the habitation and compleat maintenance of the objects which it instructs and cloaths. But then, it is free from an objection, to which those extensions of charity, however pleasing and noble in themselves, must frequently be obnoxious. When a child is separated many years from its parents, and does not in any sense owe its bread to their diligence, or its accommodation to their care; when during sickness, it is never nursed by their tenderness; or amidst the errors common to youth, is never controuled by their authority; it feels but little of that obligation and dependance, which are the main source of filial duty, and an important spring of domestick happiness.

Let me call upon you, particularly to consider the neighbourhood in which this school is placed. It is in a part of London; where manufactories have abounded to a prodigious extent, and where vast numbers of industrious poor people have dwelt for ages. There is

not a spot in this great metropolis, or its environs, where Charity-Schools seem equally necessary. Nor will I hide my sincere regret, that, of late years, capricious fashion has almost totally deserted the articles of trade, which used to employ thousands of families in that district; so that *Spital-Fields* now presents a scene of calamity, which cannot be exceeded in any part of Great-Britain.

And that leads me to urge this act of charity, on account of the severe necessity of the times.—*The times*, will many say! this argument should have been kept out of sight. “The times” require us to set bounds to our generosity, and to give less than we formerly did, when peace spread our commerce over the globe, and plenty was wafted back on every tide. I must allow, this seems a very specious objection, but it cannot silence me. Shew me the Theatre which has been shut, or the kind of pleasure which has been abandoned, on account of the distresses of war; prove, that luxury has received a fatal wound,

wound, or that dissipation is forsaken by her votaries: then, and not till then, will I relinquish this plea for giving assistance to the poor. The expence of one evening's entertainment is all the boon I ask. Alas! the poor are the principal sufferers, on whom the evils of war devolve. When a distinguished manufacturer finds his business checked, and his commercial connexions suspended, what is the first step he takes? he turns off a multitude of hands, which in the time of peace and prosperity he constantly employed. Thus, while provisions are daily growing dearer, the hard-working mechanick is deprived in a moment of the means of procuring them. And thus it ever will be found, that though wars originate in the passions and schemes of the great, their speediest and worst miseries are endured by the poor.

Behold, my fellow Christians, these Hundred Children; they are my clients, and their appearance will better plead their cause, than any advocate whatever. Behold them rescued from the nakedness of rags, and from the

wickedness of the streets; behold them, not only decently apparel'd, but usefully and suitably taught; their education is neither too high, nor too low, it is neither learned nor superficial, but precisely adapted to that path of life, in which they are to walk hereafter. Should Providence spare their lives, each of these young persons may become the head of a family; each may be as the center of many circles, more and more dilated and expanded; and so not only their children, but their children's children, shall rise up and call you blessed.—“Tell me not (said a late admirable preacher,*) of a rich and mighty Sultan, cloathed in his robes, attended with his retinue, waving his sword over half the east—I will shew you a much nobler spectacle, a charity-boy going with his bible under his arm, to a place of Christian worship. That bible is his directory for both worlds: its maxims will teach him prudence; its precepts restrain him from vice; its promises support him in affliction: while he is able to read

* The Reverend Mr. Robinson, of Cambridge.

read that volume, he cannot want a guide for time, or a charter for eternity."

What can I say more? Would you make a number of innocent children happy? Would you encourage modesty, cheerfulness, and industry? Would you qualify youth to gain their future maintenance, and not be a burden to the parish? Would you train up persons of both sexes, in such a manner, that if ever they become domesticks in your family, they may never infect, but improve your own children? Would you countenance liberality of sentiment, and shew a decided preference to those institutions, where bigotry, with its four looks and narrow standard, has no admission? (*f*) Would you imitate the generous spirit of your fore-fathers, and provide for the next age, as they have done for the present? Would you have a share in that felicity, so pointedly described by your Saviour, "it is more blessed to give than to receive?"

C 4

Would

(*f*) The children of this school attend, on a Lord's Day, at places of public worship, belonging to all the three denominations of Dissenters.

Would you emulate the conduct and happiness of the Patriarch, "I was a father to the poor, the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy?"—You have an opportunity of doing all this to day; give, as ye are furnished with ability; give, on Christian motives: and your labour in the Lord shall not be in vain. "Now, he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness." (g)

Before I address the children, I shall just observe, that there are three descriptions of persons, from whom, if present, I expect nothing on this occasion.—Such as may not have listened, during the progress of the discourse; for how can men be influenced by considerations which they have not heard?—Such as are habitual misers; for it would require powers, far beyond any I can exert, to open the hand which settled and determined
avarice

avarice has closed.—And finally, such as cannot pay to others the debts which justice demands ; for till the claims of justice are satisfied, almsgiving would not be a duty, but a sin. These are the only three exceptions I can suppose.

And now, *my dear children*, I will ask you a few plain questions, and give you a little advice, which you may think of, when you are by yourselves. I shall not, knowingly, use a word which is above your capacity. How came you into this charity-school? Was it, because there was not a sufficient number of poor children, out of which the managers could make a choice? Are not multitudes of your age to be found in every street of this city, who have scarcely clothes to cover them, who are ignorant because nobody teaches them, who are given to lying and stealing, because no one corrects them, who are wretched, because no one has pity on them? Are there not many fathers and mothers, who are every week applying to the governors of this school,

and begging that their children may be taken in ; but they must wait, till there shall be room for them. Ought you not therefore to think it a great mercy, that room has been found for you ? Do not abuse such a favour, it is the most valuable you can receive. If you make a good use of what is taught you ; if you get your lessons with care ; if you remember what you learn ; if you are humble, thankful, orderly, diligent, honest and good, you will be fit to be servants or apprentices ; you will be taken into sober families ; you will meet with encouragement when out of your time ; you will have friends to smile upon you ; and though you may never be rich, which indeed would be no blessing to you, you may be able to live with much credit and comfort in the world. I assure you, that several persons, who when children were brought up as you are in this school, have since been so prospered in business, that they have become contributors to the charity. But what is far more important, if you honour God, and every day pray to him ; if you love and imitate Christ, who died for your souls ;
if

if you practise what you are able to read and understand in the Bible, you will be fit for death and eternity; you will be happy and honoured, and blessed in heaven, forever.—Oh, my young friends, consider that three years will soon be gone, and that many of you have not the half of that time to stay in the school: often put the question to yourselves, what will be your own bitter reflection, after you have left it, if you have neglected the great advantages which you here enjoy? How will you condemn yourselves, if you have been idle, inattentive, rude, and disobedient? Let me entreat you to be always dutiful to your master and mistress; they take great pains with you: behave to each other with kindness and brotherly love; guard against quarrels; never use any bad words; always tell the truth, and in your secret prayers, never forget to ask the blessing of God on these your benefactors, and upon *their children*, many of whom, I doubt not, seeing you thus collected together, will feel their tender hearts moved, and gladly, on this occasion, give something towards your relief.

Pray

Pray particularly for *poor children*, who are left in the wide world, without instruction, without comfort, without decency, without a friend, and perhaps without a home. I commend you to the grace of God; and shall sum up every wish I could possibly form for you, in this one—that you may know by experience all the happiness contained in that promise of your great and good Maker, “I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.” (b)

If any of the parents of these children are now present, (and it would be strange, it would be ungrateful, if none of them were) I must freely speak a word to them.—Though your children are not immediately looking up to you for instruction, since they were admitted into this school, yet it is in your power, either to second the means which are used for their benefit, or to render them of little worth. If you take God’s name in vain; if you deal in fraud; if you allow falsehood either in them or yourselves; if you profane

profane the sabbath, and neglect publick worship ; if you suffer your children to see you intoxicated, or to hear from your lips language unchaste and licentious—your example will probably do more harm, than all the lessons in this school can do good. You will be pulling down, what we are endeavouring to build up. Such a conduct would neither be thankful, nor just ; and a dreadful account you would have to render in the last day, for defeating the purposes of this benevolent institution ; for robbing society of what might have been useful members ; and for ruining the souls of your children for ever. “ But I hope better things of you, even things which accompany salvation, though I thus speak.” Strive to fulfil your duty to your children ; and I hope and pray, that they may be spared to be your growing comfort, to assist you when the infirmities of age shall advance, and beyond the grave to be sharers of your eternal joy.

To conclude. Let all those who are placed in lower circumstances, and are not as yet become

become heads of families, learn one important lesson from the agreeable appearance of these children, and from all that has been said to recommend such a charity. Should they hereafter be settled, and sustain the parental relation, it is very natural that they should earnestly wish for the kind relief which is here afforded ; but they have no reason to expect the smallest benefit from these institutions, unless they have previously established a good character in society. To the character of the parents, the eye of all managers is principally directed : and let every man remember, that a good character is not formed at once. It is not a sudden desire, or a late repentance : but must be the result of long tried fidelity, sobriety, amiableness and religion. We none of us know, in what situations Providence may fix us ; to what difficulties we may be exposed ; or what degree of help we may need : therefore, separate from the future rewards of a good and holy conduct, we ought to consider, that it brings with it many temporal advantages, which no
thoughtful

thoughtful man will despise. He, that by
 uprightness and religion secures his character,
 is in the fairest way of gaining, either a com-
 petent independency, or a well-timed and
 liberal relief. "Godliness is profitable unto
 all things, having promise of the life which
 now is, as well as of that which is to
 come." (i)

(i) 1 Tim. iv. 8.

F I N I S.

The first man will do it.

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